GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEFENCE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2127
ANSWERED ON:06.05.2016
Muslim Personnel in Defence Forces
Ajmal Maulana Badruddin

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether keeping beard for Muslim Personnel in Army and Air Force is not permissible, if so, the reasons therefor;

(b) the number of Muslim personnel terminated / restricted from Army and Air Force for keeping beard so far;

(c) the guidelines and orders of the Government in this regard;

(d) whether the Government proposes to issue orders / guidelines for allowing to keep beard for Muslim personnel which is obligatory on Muslims according to Islamic principles; and

(e) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

Answer

MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI MANOHAR PARRIKAR)

(a) In the case of Army, Defence Service Regulations and Policy letter dated 09.05.1991 provide that non-Sikh persons are not permitted to grow beard permanently. However, growing of beard for short period of time by non-Sikh personnel in Indian Army is permitted on prior approval of Commanding Officer on religious grounds. In the case of Air Force, as far as non-Sikh personnel are concerned, all those personnel whose religion/ religious practices demand sporting of beard and moustaches; they could continue to wear the beard as long as such a permission has been granted to them prior to issuance of letter dated June 09, 2003 or they had beard and moustaches, as part of their religious practices, at the time of joining the Air Force. The aim of the guidelines is to lay down a common code of conduct and bearing amongst its cadres.

(b) As per information available, there is no such case in Army. In the case of Air Force, two personnel were discharged from service vide order dated November 26, 2008.

(c) As given in (a) above.

(d) & (e): There is no proposal to change the existing rules/guidelines at present since the subject matter is subjudice before Hon'ble Supreme Court.

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